Replicating Results

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Replicating Results

by raiast

Summary

Directly follows the events of Sleep Study, though could be read as a stand-alone (if, for whatever unknown reason, you want to skip ladder sex/blow jobs).

Will joins Hannibal for dinner to discuss the results of their 'relaxation exercise'. Things get completely out of hand. Or in hand. Whatever.

Notes

I...don't even know what happened here. This was begging to be written after I posted Sleep Study and it somehow turned into something decidedly less cracky as I went on. I am envisioning (at least) one more part to this series.

The rest of the evening passed in a blur for Will. It seemed to him that the best course of self-preservation was to shut down entirely and let himself go into auto-drive, lest he drive himself insane dissecting the events of his last therapy session. He thanked whatever god might be out there for calm weather and empty roads, for he found himself turning down his little dirt path with little memory of actually *driving* to Wolf Trap.

In no time at all Will was climbing up his porch and opening the door to a flood of fur and questing noses. He gave each companion a perfunctory pat of a greeting before shooing them off to do their business. He stood stoic on the porch as he waited for them, gaze locked ahead unseeing at the dark treeline on the edge of his property. When the entirety of his pack had found haven in the living room once again, Will shut and locked his front door.

His fingers trailed down the buttons of his shirt before he could think to stop them. The last time they had been fastened the action had been completed by warm and slender fingers. Will began to have a humorous thought wondering how in the world one could find someone's fingers *elegant* before he remembered that he wasn't thinking about that--about him--right now. He reached up to snag his shirt by the back of the collar, easing it over his head without opening the buttons. He dropped on the table next to him, blanketing the files and loose papers from the open case he was working (or, in Jack's opinion, *not* working) on.

He unbuckled his pants as he shuffled toward his bed, letting them drop and stepping out of them in one motion. He absently brushed them off to the side with his foot so he wouldn't be stepping on a belt buckle first thing in the morning. The sound of glass clunking against wood and sloshing liquid met his ears, though he couldn't be bothered to right the bottle before he was falling onto the mattress and burrowing his face into a pillow.

Will slept. And if he had any dreams, bad or otherwise, he didn't remember them come morning.

So familiar he was to waking with a lurch, as if the ground had dropped from beneath him, that it took several long moments for Will to realize that he was no longer sleeping. His body was warm and dry, rather that sweat-soaked and shivering. Instead of the frantic tattoo borne of terror, his heartbeat was steady and sure with contentment. He stretched out, extending his fingers and toes as far away from his body as possible as he arched his spine and moaned at the exquisite feeling of rested and lax muscles flexing. Is this how people usually woke up?

A glance to the clock showed it wasn't even five a.m. yet, but Will had fallen into bed around ten and, having achieved seven hours of uninterrupted sleep for the first time since Jack had strolled into his classroom asking to borrow his imagination, he couldn't be bothered to mind the early rising. Despite the hour, the dogs stirred when he did and so, after preparing a thermos of coffee and bundling up accordingly, Will and his pack set off on a long stroll through the frost-crisped grass.

The sky was only beginning to brighten the eastern horizon, but Will was so familiar with these grounds that he trekked on with surety. When he reached his stream he sat upon a

boulder as the dogs explored the brush around them. He sipped on his coffee and watched the deep blue of the sky reluctantly make way for shades of violet, pink and then, finally, orange. Only when he had drained his thermos of coffee did he allow himself to reflect on the evening before.

So. Dr. Hannibal Lecter had sucked him off. Due to a professional concern for his sleeping habits, of course. He couldn't deny that it wasn't a fantasy come to life. Hannibal was the epitome of a catch; cultured, intelligent, ridiculously skilled in all manner of things from drawing and cooking to saving lives and unburdening minds. Not to mention the man was a complete and utter *snack*; handsome and confident in a way too cruel for this world. And it was reasonable, Will decided, that one could conclude from recent events that the attraction was not as hopelessly one-sided as he had assumed.

He tentatively closed his eyes and recalled the memory of Hannibal, on his knees in his perfect fucking trousers, soft lips and hot, wet tongue wrapping around--

His blood pooled so traitorously quickly to his dick that it nearly left him lightheaded and Will banished the image, shivering with the aftershocks of the phantom sensation that it produced. He squirmed uncomfortably on his rock, shifting his jeans to alleviate the tension in his groin. The absolute worst part about all of this, he concluded, was that Hannibal may have considered their 'exercise' as a one-time experiment. And the results had been so tremendously positive that Will wondered if he'd ever sleep again if the action was never to be repeated.

That thought brought with it the reminder of assuring Hannibal that he would call him today. Will felt himself blushing furiously at the mere notion. Well, it was only six a.m. at this point. Far too early for such a call, so Will figured he had plenty of time to come to terms with it--should he decide to follow through with the request at all, that is. Of course, if he said that he would and then didn't that would be rude, wouldn't it? What was the etiquette on communication after receiving oral sex from your psychiatrist?

Somehow, Will didn't think that Emily Post had ever covered that one.

When the cold finally began to creep into his fingers and toes, Will stretched stiff limbs and stood, whistling for his pack and scanning them for a quick head count before heading home. He was contemplating what sort of meager breakfast he might be able to scrounge together when he stepped back into the house and paused upon spotting his still-buttoned shirt on the table. He gingerly picked it up, fingers once more ghosting over the buttons of their own accord. When his eyes focused past it to the files scattered about on the table something seemed to snap together inside his mind.

His phone was to his ear and ringing before he was even conscious of moving. "Jack. We were wrong. It's not the staff at the bar, it's the way the victims are *leaving*. It can't be a Lyft or Uber driver--too much of a paper trail with the apps--it's a cab service. A lot of them don't even wait for calls, just park around the bars near closing and wait until the drunks come pouring out. Check with Green & White and Black & Yellow, they frequent the downtown scene the most. Each car would be tagged so they can track it. There will be a record of at least one driver that has been in the area on each night of the abductions between midnight and three."

“I’ll have the team start pulling data,” Jack responded, much more alert than he’d been upon answering the call. “I’ll meet you at Quantico.”

It was incredible how that one little detail could snowball into a resolution for a case Will had been struggling with for nearly a month. Once they knew to focus on a cab driver the rest of the information had fallen into place for them. By two o’clock they had singled out a suspect, made an arrest, and Will was in his office finishing up his report.

He closed his laptop and stretched out in his chair, cracking his back with a contented sigh. It was a relief to feel that everything had been wrapped up, and so early in the day. He was contemplating what he might do with his free afternoon, now that he didn’t have any more obligations for the day, when he spotted his phone sitting to the side of his work space.

Okay, one *more obligation.*

Another sigh puffed from his lips, this one considerably more resigned. It was just a phone call, but Will almost found himself longing for another case to sink into to put off the task a little bit longer.

That’s great, Will. Hope that another lunatic starts butchering innocent people so you don’t have to make a phone call.

When he had stared his phone down, chewing his lip anxiously, for a solid five minutes and the thing still hadn’t sprouted legs and walked away, he cursed softly and picked it up.

He didn’t get farther than scrolling to the letter ‘H’ in his contacts list before he was frozen again. There sat two options:

Hannibal (Mobile)

Hannibal (Office)

Which number was he supposed to call? It was Friday afternoon, so there was every chance that Hannibal was with a patient, or possibly even out of his office for the weekend. The thought of leaving a voicemail on the esteemed Dr. Lecter’s office phone, however vague he might make the message, had Will’s ears burning. He briefly considered and discarded the notion of sending Hannibal a text. He didn’t seem like the texting sort--they had never communicated in such a way, at least. And it wasn’t exactly the kind of subject you bring up in your first text message to someone.

He gave his abused bottom lip one more harsh bite in determination and dialed Hannibal’s mobile number, willing that he would and wouldn’t pick up in equal measure.

“Hello, Will,” the smooth voice greeted. There was a terribly awkward span of a few seconds before Will could make his voice work.

“Hannibal. Hi,” he tried to sound casual. *Was that casual? Was that* too *casual?!* Will spent another few silent seconds desperately wondering what kind of tone this phone call was

supposed to have. “How are you?” he choked out finally, since that was generally how one human being began a conversation with another.

“I’m doing well, thank you for asking,” he was, as ever, the epitome of polite, though Will couldn’t help but wonder if that was amusement he heard laced in the good doctor’s voice. “It’s good that you called this number, I’m just on my way out of the office for the weekend,” he informed him, as though he were privy to the dilemma Will had been faced with just minutes before. “And how are you feeling today?”

Relieved to have been granted an opening to the topic, Will sagged back in his chair and took his first real breath since he hit the ‘call’ button. “Really good, actually. I got seven solid hours of sleep last night,” he cringed at the pride in his tone. *Christ, I sound like a toddler that made it through the night with no accidents.*

“Very good, Will,” Hannibal’s pleased tone and praise--as though Will did something *worthy* of praise instead of the simple feat of staying unconscious for an extended amount of time--should have only compounded his embarrassment but somehow had the opposite effect of putting him at ease. “I’m sure both your mind and body were grateful for the much needed rest.”

Will was internally debating on whether or not he was supposed to thank him for the effective ‘relaxation exercise’ when Hannibal saved him once more.

“I would love to discuss this further, but I’m afraid I’m going to have to cut this call short, Will.”
“Oh. O-okay,” he nodded as if Hannibal could see him. *Idiot.*

“I’ve a few stops to make on my way home--procuring ingredients for a new recipe I’m trying out for dinner tonight.” A beat. “Would you like to come?”

Will choked. “W-what?”

“I was asking if you would like to join me for dinner this evening.” *Definite* amusement in his voice this time; Will suspected the dubious phrasing was purposeful on Hannibal’s part.

“Uh, okay. Y-yes. Thank you. When--”

“Seven o’clock would be perfect,” Hannibal supplied. “Bring your appetite.” Will could imagine that last sentence accompanied by a wink and shuddered. The call was ended before he was forced to stutter out a farewell.

It was only on his way home that Will recalled what Hannibal had said right before extending the dinner invitation.

I would love to discuss this further…

Discuss this further

Will cursed.

He changed his shirt three times. He wasn't even entirely sure why. Every time he looked in the mirror he felt as though his outfit wasn't appropriate.

"Appropriate for *what*?" he muttered to himself, irritated as he threw another shirt on the floor. This wasn't a date or a business dinner or some black-tie affair. This was dinner with a friend (*during which we are probably going to talk about oral sex,* he mused, and his stomach simultaneously flipped and dropped at the prospect). Any one of the shirts that he'd pulled from his closet would have been appropriate to wear to one of their meals in the past. Why was tonight any different?

It wasn't until he was taking the effort to wrestle a comb through his unruly mop of damp curls that Will realized he was *grooming* himself.

He shot himself a dubious look in the mirror. "Expecting to get some tonight, Graham?"

Expecting? No. Hoping?

Will smoothed a hand over his shirt and pants and he gave himself another once over in the mirror. *Good enough for a town this size*, his father's voice echoed through his head. Will shrugged in response to his own memory and grabbed his coat. *It's just dinner*, he informed himself again.

In a stunning display of presumption, Will corralled the dogs into the kitchen and laid out a few absorbent bathroom pads.

Just in case.

Hannibal's new recipe was something that contained several French words that Will couldn't hope to repeat or remember enough to google later, so he merely nodded at the plate he was presented with and complimented Hannibal on its fine flavors.

The man was sure to have noticed Will was ill at ease from the moment he arrived, because dinner conversation was kept light and neutral; comments on the unseasonably warm weather and how it was affecting various produce that Hannibal enjoyed, inquiries into the well-being of his pack. Even when the discussion turned a little heavier to the case that Will had broken that morning, he was grateful for the topic.

Perhaps Hannibal had realized that Will was uncomfortable with the prospect of their previous discussion and had decided to graciously ignore the topic altogether. That hopeful notion and three glasses of wine with dinner had lulled him into a false sense of security, so when Hannibal returned to their table with dessert and a new conversation, Will felt as though the rug had been ripped out from under him.

"So. It seems that we can proclaim our experiment last night a success, yes?"

The fork slipped from his fingers and clattered against his plate at the abrupt topic change. Will hummed something that might have been an uncertain agreement.

“You experienced an overwhelmingly positive increase in sleep duration--I take it your slumber was free of nightmares?” he asked, and Will nodded as he forced a bit of bread pudding into his mouth. “One could argue, with your sudden epiphany in regards to the killer you were searching for, that you also experienced an increase in mental faculties.”

“Yeah, it was a hell of a blow job.” Will didn’t realize that he had even spoken out loud until Hannibal’s fork froze halfway to his mouth.

“Indeed,” was all Hannibal had to say to that. Will felt a brief flare of satisfaction at having shocked the eternally composed man followed by an overwhelming mortification at his thoughtless crassness. His face flamed.

“Jesus, sorry, Hannibal, that was...that was really rude,” he stuttered out an embarrassed apology, experiencing the conflicting desire to both sink into the ground and bolt for the exit.

“Not at all,” Hannibal assured him when he had finished his bite and laid his fork down gently on his plate. “I imagine this topic of conversation is difficult for you to discuss with me. I realize it’s a little unorthodox.”

“Don’t take it personally. I can’t imagine having this discussion with *anyone* comfortably,” he chanced a glance up and was relieved to find a reassuring smile quirking Hannibal’s lips, amusement glinting in his eyes.

“Perhaps retiring to the study with a scotch will put you more at ease?” A rhetorical question if he ever heard one. Hannibal took their dishes to the kitchen and sent Will along to the study.

At Hannibal’s instruction, he helped himself to the sideboard, pouring a generous three fingers of whiskey and downing a third of it in one nervous gulp. He used the moment alone to take a deep breath and will himself to stop being so damn neurotic. It was obvious that Hannibal didn’t have any regrets about what had happened the night before (although with Will’s erratic behavior he may now be rethinking his decision). He had finally managed to get his heart rate under control and was basking in the warmth of the fireplace as well as the warmth buzzing through his body from the wine and liquor when Hannibal joined him.

“It seems to me that there lies a choice before us,” his voice was low, smoky. The dulcet tones combined with the dancing flames left Will feeling entranced. “It’s obvious that our little endeavor yesterday yielded the desired results,” Will nodded, each one of his nerves very aware of how close behind him Hannibal was. When he spoke again, Will could feel his warm breath ghost over the nape of his neck. “Now we could leave it at that, consider our little experiment a success...or we could do what any good scientist or researcher would do.”

“Which is?” the words left him on a shaky breath, his stomach twisting and desire pooling low in his belly as he saw where this was going.

Hannibal's soft lips brushed along the shell of his ear when he replied. "See if we can replicate the results."

A shiver ripped through Will, he clamped his jaw tight until the urge to whimper subsided. "You want to blow me again?"

A set of large, warm hands settled low on his hips, a soft chuckle puffed a hot breath into his ear. "There are a great many things I wish to do to you, Will."

"*Fuck*," Will whimpered. "Okay."

One of Hannibal's hands reached around him to gingerly pull the crystal tumbler from Will's grasp, setting it on a nearby side table. He shifted around Will's frozen form and claimed his hand, giving it a gentle squeeze and leading him from the room.

He was led on feet that seemed to not quite touch the ground, up the stairs that he'd never climbed and into a bedroom that was, presumably (if the opulent decor and grand, king-sized bed were anything to go by), Hannibal's.

"If you would be so kind as to remove your clothes and lay back on the bed," Hannibal instructed; the doctor began his own process of stripping away his many layers unhurriedly.

Will was...slightly more eager. His shirt was on the floor behind him in seconds. He didn't bother removing the belt from his pants, merely opening it and shoving the offending slacks down to his ankles. When he tried to step out of them he realized that he'd neglected to take off his shoes. He struggled with attempting to kick-step out of the fabric around his shoes, nearly toppling over in the process.

Hannibal was before him in a flash, jacket and waistcoat abandoned somewhere. He steadied Will, smiling down at him fondly.

Will gave a nervous chuckle. "Little tipsy," he admitted sheepishly.

A slight furrow appeared between Hannibal's light eyebrows, his smile turning tight. "Do you feel you are too inebriated to give proper consent?"

"No, no, not at all," Will assured him, mentally bitch-slapping himself for giving Hannibal and his infernal propriety a reason to end this before it started. "I, uh, I actually thought something like this might happen tonight."

"Thought, or hoped?" That teasing tone was back in Hannibal's words and Will couldn't decide if he wanted to bristle at feeling mocked or flirt back with wild abandon. He settled on remaining silent, which was fine, because instead of expecting some kind of response, Hannibal lowered himself to the ground slowly. He first pushed up the bottom of Will's pant-leg and grasped his calf firmly, bending his knee until his loafer could be slipped from his foot. He extended this process to the following foot and then guided Will's legs to step out of the pants pooled around his feet.

Will's arousal was painfully evident, tenting his boxers obscenely as a flush crept down his neck to bloom across his chest. When Hannibal glanced up at him from his position on the floor, Will's cock twitched and his breath caught in his throat. *This man is going to devour me.* It was his last coherent thought as Hannibal reached up to draw Will's boxers down to join his pants. His gaze lingered on Will's stiff cock, poised and already leaking, and for a moment Will was anticipating the wet heat of Hannibal's mouth to encase him. He tried not to look disappointed when the older man rose to his feet without further contact.

"Now then, on the bed, please," he was instructed again. Will ran his tongue across dry lips and complied, stretching out across the duvet on his back. Hannibal stood at the foot of the bed, surveying him for a long moment as he folded back the sleeves on his impossibly white shirt to his elbows and removing his tie. He undid the top button of his shirt and set aside the strip of silk on the armchair with his jacket before moving to one of the nightstands and retrieving something from a drawer there.

His heart sped up two-fold as he realized it was a bottle of lube. Will's entire being buzzed with a nervous excitement as he recalled his distinct lack of experience in this realm. His lungs seized when Hannibal climbed onto the bed with him. He was sorry to see that the doctor had seemed to decide against removing any more of his own clothing, suddenly feeling overexposed and self-conscious by comparison. He wondered at what the man might look like beneath all of his layers of fancy suits and ties. The bespoke suits fit him like a glove, accentuating a lean frame with broad shoulders, and probably cost more than one of Will's paychecks. Will's off-the-rack sport coat drowned his slim body and gave an air of someone wearing baggy clothes in an attempt to shoplift a ham.

The only skin that the man ever deigned to show the world was his hands and face. Will had not even seen him without his shirt buttoned right up to his neck before now. He eyed the hollow at the base of his neck and Will's mouth went dry all over again. The only other glimpse he had gotten of him was the firm, corded muscles of his forearms the few times that Will had watched him cooking. But if Hannibal looked as alluring as he did with clothes *on* … Will had a remarkable imagination, but he knew that no image he conjured could actually compare to reality.

"Will?"

He was ripped from his musings by Hannibal's soft, questioning voice. Will flushed at being caught lost in his mind once again. He was finding that it was very difficult to keep his concentration reigned in around Hannibal. His focused his attention back to the room, breath hitching again when he became aware that Hannibal was on the bed beside him, leaning over his body. "Hm?"

Hannibal didn't seem to take offense to Will's wandering attention. "I was asking if you have ever been penetrated before."

Will's face flamed with a blush and he shook his head silently, worried about what sound might come out were he to open his mouth. Hannibal reached up to procure the pillow that Will's head wasn't nestled on, his warm hands guiding Will's hips up to tuck the pillow beneath him.

“We’ll go slow, then,” he assured him, a hand on each thigh as he encouraged Will to spread his legs. He shifted on the bed until he was positioned between them and then confidently maneuvered Will’s legs until his knees were bent and his feet were flat on the bed. He realized the pillow to lift his hips was to better expose himself to Hannibal and felt a blush invade his cheeks once again. Between the flush in his face and his achingly hard cock it was a wonder that there remained enough blood to circulate properly through Will’s body. He didn’t even realize he was tensed and trembling until Hannibal made a soft shushing noise and gave a soothing stroke to one of his thighs. “Relax, Will,” he murmured, and Will let his body melt into the mattress beneath him.

He tensed for a split-second at the first touch of a slick finger to his entrance, took a deep breath and willed his muscles to let go. “Good, Will,” Hannibal encouraged him softly, and Will whimpered and let his legs fall open further as the finger was eased inside of him. Hannibal moved at a glacial pace, allowing Will to become acclimated with the sensation. When Will was able to relax fully around the digit, Hannibal began to work it in and out of him smoothly. It was a curious feeling; not wholly uncomfortable but not innately pleasurable either. A second slick finger joined the first and Will’s breath caught in surprise; he fought the instinctual urge to clamp down on the intrusion and focused on his breathing. Hannibal made a soft noise of approval as Will opened for him further.

“You’re doing so well, Will,” Will’s cock throbbed at the praise, at the way Hannibal’s tongue wrapped itself around his name. It made him wish that no other person in this world could say his name but Hannibal. He bolstered the praise by wrapping his free hand around Will’s hard length, pumping languidly in time with the motions of his fingers below.

Will keened at the added sensation. “Oh, *fuck*, yesss,” the moan that was torn from him was a shameless, needy thing. He had never been one to be vocal in bed (the few times he’d had a partner join him), but Hannibal pulled out all manner of sounds from him. “Will you fuck me?” he asked breathlessly. He wasn’t entirely sure if it was a question of curiosity or a request.

Hannibal’s low chuckle sent an unexpected shiver through him. “I don't think you’re quite ready for that,” he informed him, gave a twist of his hand as he completed an upstroke, brushing a thumb across the weeping slit of Will’s head. “Yet.”

Will whimpered, the sound morphing to a shocked cry of pleasure when Hannibal bent the two fingers inside him and stroked at his prostate. His body seized and arched off the bed at the unexpected sensation. He recovered just a moment later and used every ounce of strength he still clung to to thrust himself down onto Hannibal’s fingers. “*Fuck*, please, again, *again*,” he begged. He might have been embarrassed at his reaction, might still grow to regret and resent it the next day, if he hadn’t been so close to release at the man’s expert hands.

“Beautiful, wanton thing,” the words ghosted warmth over the head of Will’s cock before it was enveloped in a much sweeter heat. Will cried out again, hips bucking up into the chasm of Hannibal’s mouth greedily. When Hannibal swallowed him down, his cock nestled perfectly against tongue and throat, he crooked his fingers once more,
pressing insistently against that sweet spot deep inside him.

The force of Will's orgasm struck him like nothing he had ever experienced before. He came hard, gasping and sobbing and every nerve in his body expanding and exploding in a supernova of pleasure. His body was still racked with gasping breaths that allowed too-little oxygen and tingling tremors when he realized that he had the duvet clenched beneath his fists so tightly that his fingers had gone white and numb.

"Magnificent," Hannibal purred, sending another overwhelming shock of pleasure through Will's exhausted frame.

"*Hannibal*," Will mewled weakly, for want of anything else to say.

Hannibal shushed him, one hand reaching up to push Will's sweat-soaked curls back from his forehead before stroking down his cheek and jaw fondly. "Close your eyes, Will."

Suggestion or demand, Will did not know or care. He obliged, taking the first full, deep breath that he could remember in the last half hour and then falling effortlessly into darkness.

There were no nightmares. Only soft lips and probing fingers and the soothing lilt of a lover's voice.

For a moment, when Will woke and found the clock to read 12:28, he assumed that he had drifted off for a few hours. It wasn't until he became aware of the bright light slipping through the crack in unfamiliar curtains that he realized he had been sleeping for more than thirteen hours.

He sighed and melted into a mattress that seemed to have been crafted just to cradle his body, twisting up in sheets that *must* have been spun of a material that Will had never had the pleasure to touch before. He wagered that he could have stayed cocooned there all day, were it not for his bladder that was very insistent about being relieved and the overwhelming guilt he felt when he thought about how long he had left his poor dogs unattended.

He extracted himself from the luxurious bedding, with great difficulty and a determination he found quite admirable, and stepped into the en suite to relieve himself. He splashed his face with cool water and returned to the bedroom, finding his clothing folded neatly on an armchair near the window. As he made his way to the lower level of the house his nose pulled him in the direction of the kitchen rather than his intended destination of the exit.

Hannibal glanced up from the stove as soon as he entered, shooting him an easy smile that had Will's blood thrumming. "Good morning."

"Good afternoon," Will corrected with a nod to the brightness that shone through the windows and Hannibal dipped his head in a friendly concession.

"All the same, I've made breakfast. It seems you have impeccable timing, Will. I was just about to come wake you."

“Thank you,” he began, unsure if he was grateful for the thoughtful gesture of the meal or the mind-blowing orgasm he’d received at the doctor’s hands the night before. Perhaps just for his friendship in general. “But I really need to get going. My dogs--”

“Have been walked, fed and,” Hannibal shot him a guilty grin, “are likely feasting on a few spare bones I happened to have laying around.”

Something swelled in Will’s chest; appreciation or gratitude or fondness. Perhaps something that enveloped all three and so much more. He refused to dissect it in the moment. “You drove all the way out to Wolf Trap just for my dogs?”

“I knew you would be worried about them,” Hannibal informed him, dishing out his work onto a plate on the island between them. Will grinned when he recognized the protein scramble that Hannibal had served him for their first meal together. He slid the plate toward him across the counter, retrieving a fork and passing that over as well. Will took a seat on the stool before the plate and dug in. “I have to admit, my actions weren’t entirely altruistic. I was quite determined to leave you undisturbed so I could accurately gauge how long you slept...for our experiment.”

Will swallowed his bite of eggs thickly, heat blooming across his face as he recalled the night before. “Yeah,” he started, clearing his throat awkwardly. “About that. Sorry I passed out like that.”

Hannibal cocked his head slightly to the left at the apology. Will tried (and failed) not to compare him to one of his dogs. “There’s no need to apologize, Will. Your restfulness was the sole intention of the venture. Coffee?”

“Yes, please,” he accepted the offer, and Hannibal moved over to a counter that housed something that looked like equipment from a science lab and retrieved a cup for him. “I just mean…” he cleared his throat again, staring down at his plate of eggs and sausage. “I didn’t mean to leave you hanging like that.”

He glanced up as Hannibal set a coffee down before him; his expression was one of muted confusion.

“Unattended,” Will extrapolated, blushing furiously.

Recognition flickered through Hannibal’s amber eyes and the edges of his lips twitched. “I had no expectation of reciprocation, Will,” Hannibal informed him. “My actions were motivated by a scientific curiosity.”

Will swallowed a scalding gulp of the most delicious coffee he had ever tasted. “*Purely* scientific?” he questioned with a boldness he didn’t truly feel.

For a long moment, a heavy silence stretched between them.

“Finish your breakfast,” Hannibal encouraged softly.

Will felt that the non-answer was quite telling.

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